

Captain William A. Barnard, 20th Michigan Infantry, 1862-1865.

Frederick City, Sept. 21/62

Dear Sister

We reached here last night after a three days march from Leesboro (11 miles north of Washington). I am as well as usual and think I shall get along if I do not get shot. We march about 15 miles a day - & carry on our backs a knap sack with our over coat & blanket, shirts &c - weighing 30 or 40 pounds - a haversack with three days rations of salt pork & pilot bread - a canteen with three pints of water & a cartridge box with 48 rounds of cartridges, besides a Springfield Rifle which makes a pack pedlars load & gets heavy before night traveling through the dust in the hot sun. At night we stop in some open field - stack our arms - unload our baggage - cook our suppers - twist our blankets around us - take our knapsacks for a pillow & have a good night's rest - without taking cold or suffering any inconvenience. We have traveled through a splendid country since we left Washington. The land is rolling soil good if well cultivated, well timbered, with plenty of good water. The inhabitants are farmers & all own slaves - are good Unionists when we pass them & good "Secesh" when the Rebels pass them. Frederick is a fine looking place but somewhat desolated at present. We are bound for Wilcox's Brigade - the Richmond prisoner - he has a brigade of Mich. troops - & is three or four days march ahead of us. I have not seen a paper for several days to get any news but learn from wounded soldiers & stragglers that Seigh ^{Seigh} [?] is in possession of Leesburgh & that Jackson & ^(sic) crossed the River into Va. & McClellan is after him. I saw Lt. H. D. F. _____ when we were near Alexandria & took dinner with him two weeks ago today & have seen Bancroft of our class - since then he passed our Camp with the Mich. 4th & is in advance of us-if we happen to get near the 7th Mich. I may see Ham Higby.

I have not rec'd a letter from any one since I left Jackson, Mich. I want you to write often & send me the Coes [!] Republican occasionally if you get it. I wrote to the Editor to send it to Father.

We do not get any news here from our Armys - probably not so much as you do - or know anything about where we are going ^{for all} we do is to obey orders - & when the bugle sounds pack up & travel ^{travelling} [?] - & when we get the command to half - stop and rest & eat a hard cracker & slice of raw pork.

We are right in sight of a range of the Blue Mountains of Va. which are the first mountains I have seen since I left home & look very much like the Willsboro Mts. from the middle of the Lake.

The inhabitants about here live in fine houses & have the appearance of being wealthy - & own niggers - & are loyal or disloyal as their own interests require.

We have three horses & 7 or 8 colored gents [?] in our Regt. - that we have picked up along the road. We have two contrabands in our Co. to help us cook & carry our baggage - We are having fine weather & shall probably march this afternoon. I am Sergeant of the Guard & have charge of the rear guard of the Regt. today. Write all the news.

Yours &c, Sergt. Barnard